

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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Local authorities engaging in international activities tend to attract criticism on three counts. Firstly from across the political spectrum there is a chorus of disapproval at suspected junketting at the tax-payers' expense. Secondly, and politically if not financially more serious, is the charge made usually by the Right, that Left wing local authorities are dabbling in issues which are outwith their sphere of competence and concern. Finally, and less well publicised, is the concern that well-meaning Councils are attempting to assist the Third World in an ill-founded and often ill-executed way.

It is these latter issues which this article will address, but mention should be made of the first. Suspicion of profligate action by local authorities is commonplace in Scotland. An opinion poll published in *The Scotsman* (30.4.90) showed that 59% of those questioned thought that "local councils waste a lot of money on unnecessary things". This is a view held across the political spectrum, though more pronounced among Conservative voters (68% regarded Councils as wasteful) than amongst Labour (53%). From time to time, illustrations of this general perception emerge. For instance, *Radical Scotland* magazine⁽¹⁾ highlighted the proclivity of Fife councillors and officials for attending international meetings. It pointed out that, variously, the Council had been represented at a Maritime Authorities Conference in "that hell-hole of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius"; at a child-abuse conference in Rio de Janeiro; on a world inspection tour of bridges, including Sydney and San Francisco; and finally at a housing conference in Calcutta (despite Fife not being a housing authority).

Such complaints are based usually on a scepticism that such delegations represent value-for-money, and on an attenuated instinct for what might be regarded as an unearned perk. In this respect local authorities may be held to be no different from other walks of life, where such activities attract sour comment be it at the trade fair in business or the international symposium in academia. The major difference of course is that local authorities are spending **our** money.

Such concern for good house-keeping may be regarded as the province of the Right, but that is not the driving force behind many of their challenges to local authority action. Supposed wastefulness of resources is symptomatic, in their eyes, of an abuse of power, whereby local authorities are straying into political arenas which are beyond their competence, and which in the Right's view, it was never intended they should enter. International issues in particular

provoke an often apoplectic reaction. Norman Tebbit for instance accused Left wing councils of pursuing an alternative foreign policy. Prominent among such offenders was the Greater London Council, whose imaginative use of power challenged the hegemony of national government in terms of direct international relationships. For instance, the GLC's Industry and Employment Committee established the Third World Information Network (TWIN) Ltd and an associated trading company Twin Trading Ltd, in 1985. The purpose of the organisation was to promote new forms of trade and technology exchange between London and the Third World. In particular it examined suitable technology to improve production, processing and packaging and established infrastructural arrangements for importing, warehousing and marketing of products.

Such stimulation of business would not on the face of it appear to be a target for Right wing attack. However the major focus of TWIN was direct relationships with Mozambique, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. Not only were these revolutionary nations, but the UK government had actively withdrawn the facilities of the Export Credit Guarantee Scheme in respect of Vietnam and Nicaragua, which amounted to a virtual trade boycott. Yet the GLC was promoting a direct relationship with Vietnam whereby bicycle-powered water pumps were made and exported from a co-operative in London, in exchange for rice from Vietnam. TWIN also produced a publication which highlighted the benefits of the Nicaraguan revolution and criticised the UK government's withholding of aid and trade support⁽²⁾.

There is little doubt that local authorities have sought ways to engage in international issues, and where this has been at variance with the policy of the government of the day, to pursue activities and relationships which could be construed as an alternative foreign policy. What is at issue here is not simply the cost of such endeavours, or even the legal right (although this has been challenged on occasions) of local authorities to pursue such a course of action. Rather it is the clash of whether or not it is legitimate for local authorities to seek to **represent** their communities, especially on such issues, rather than simply to service them.

The representative potential of local authorities has been recognised for some time, and perhaps the most successful co-ordination has been in opposition to apartheid. The first concerted campaign came in 1960 when 20 Councils in England and Wales adopted a boycott of South African products⁽³⁾. In Scotland, the first boycott came in Aberdeen in 1964,⁽⁴⁾ whilst in the same year Glasgow City Council refused to entertain members of the touring South African bowls team⁽⁵⁾. Thereafter the boycott was taken up in a piecemeal fashion by various Scottish Councils so that currently 6 Regional Councils, 20 District Councils and 1 Islands Council have officially adopted anti-apartheid policies⁽⁶⁾.

In addition, ways of supporting the struggle for majority rule were

found⁽⁷⁾. Glasgow became the first to grant the Freedom of the City to Nelson Mandela in July 1981, followed by Aberdeen in 1983. In 1981 the Lord Provost of Glasgow launched an international petition for Mayors to endorse the call for the release of Nelson Mandela, which was subsequently signed by hundreds of mayors worldwide.

Councils have also exercised their powers in respect of major events which planned to use their facilities. In 1984 Glasgow threatened to withdraw sponsorship and use of a Council-owned park for the World Pipe Band Championship if a South African band was allowed to compete. (The band from Johannesburg was withdrawn.) In 1985 Edinburgh District Council protested at the presence of Zola Budd at the Dairy Crest Games by placing an Edinburgh Against Apartheid banner on the electronic scoreboard in the Council-owned venue, Meadowbank stadium, which resulted in ITV dropping television coverage of the event⁽⁸⁾.

Such activities are not unique to the UK. In the United States for instance 24 States and 79 cities have adopted an anti-apartheid policy⁽⁹⁾. According to Michael Shuman, Director of the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, "by divesting billions of dollars in assets doing business in South Africa, (they) helped persuade Congress and the Reagan Administration to replace 'constructive engagement' with limited economic sanctions"⁽¹⁰⁾.

In the US the concept of local foreign policy is far more explicit than it is in the UK. The Center for Innovative Diplomacy publishes a quarterly Bulletin of Municipal Foreign Policy, and has produced a handbook *Building Municipal Foreign Policies*. Anti-apartheid policy is not by any means the only issue which is reflected in local action.

One of the most concerted challenges to US foreign policy has been in respect of Nicaragua. During the 1980s when the Reagan Administration overtly (and subsequently covertly) funded the Contras in their war against the Sandinista Government of Nicaragua, over 70 US cities formed twins with Nicaraguan towns in defiance of their government's stance⁽¹¹⁾. Much of their assistance was material aid, medicines, clothing and food, which were exempt from the US trade embargo. The best known of the sister groups is the Wisconsin Coordination Council on Nicaragua. Wisconsin was twinned with Nicaragua in the 1960s under the US government's "Partners of the Americas" scheme. Although this link was formed with the Somoza regime, as a 'mutual enemy of communism in the hemisphere'⁽¹²⁾, it survived the revolution. WCCN was formed in 1985 to highlight the impact of US policy and to challenge it. In 1986-7, it raised \$2.3m in assistance to Nicaragua, in defiance of Congress' aid and trade embargo. But its most dramatic success came in the wake of the capture and trial of Eugene Hasenfuss, a confessed gun runner whose plane was brought down in Nicaragua. After his sentence of 30 years imprisonment, WCCN invited Nicaraguan Vice-President Sergio Ramirez to Wisconsin to meet the Hasenfuss family, whilst the Governor of Wisconsin

Anthony Earl asked for his release. When President Ortega subsequently announced Hasenfuss' pardon, he invoked the historic Sister-State relationship as a contributing factor⁽¹³⁾.

For many critics, such citizen diplomacy is not to be countenanced. Peter J Spiro, an attorney with the US Department of State, is typical of those impatient with "State and local officials who have made themselves back-seat drivers, would-be Secretaries of State.... This is one role that the Founding Fathers did not intend to devolve to mayors, governors and city councils. In the realm of foreign policy one nation must speak with one voice."⁽¹⁴⁾ The counterpoint to this view is given by Senator Daniel Moynihan from New York who holds that "from the day the Union of States was formed, we have found that citizens, communities, states feeling strongly about moral or ethical issues in world affairs, have made their position clear, and have undertaken actions that affect them, and them alone. Often we have found that with time.... those views spread. They gain ascendancy and policy rises from the grassroots of the nation to the nation's capital."⁽¹⁵⁾

At its best, local alternatives can fulfil the function of contributing to this pluralism of debate and action. At its worst, however, it can all too often seem petty and totemic. In either case, however, the concept of an alternative foreign policy is entirely adversarial. Whether it be imaginative, effective and consistent, or hackneyed, ham-fisted and spasmodic, the local foreign policy strategy denies to government an area of authority for which it believes it holds exclusive rights. It can result, for instance in the inordinate response UK-Nicaraguan twin towns provoked from Tim Sainsbury, Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Addressing Parliament on the occasion of the victory of Mrs Chamorro, he called upon the Labour benches to "acknowledge the error of the ways of all the Socialist local authorities that gave so much support to the Sandinistas – perhaps they will now return that money to their ratepayers."⁽¹⁶⁾ In fact only 16 communities are twinned with Nicaraguan counterparts, and of these only 8 have official council recognition and support. This compares with over 160 community links with the Third World registered with the United Kingdom One World Linking Association, of which over 40 are official council twins⁽¹⁷⁾. Whilst the extent and effectiveness of local authority supported action on international issues should not be judged by the propensity to twin, nonetheless this comparison does provide some evidence that other motivating factors are more significant in prompting local authority action than making a challenge to government policy.

This is, perhaps surprisingly, particularly marked in the case of Scotland. Outside of the anti-apartheid stance discussed earlier, perhaps only the twinning of Dundee with Nablus on the occupied West Bank can be seen as a truly political decision. Certainly, the two Nicaraguan twins – Edinburgh with Bluefields, and more recently Stirling with Pearl Lagoon – were established with the expressed desire to normalise relationships with Nicaragua and not to

allow the country to be marginalised by being burdened with a role as a spear carrier for socialism. Instead, these links have sought to demonstrate the benefits brought by the practical policies of the Sandinistas to the previously isolated communities of the Atlantic Coast, and have emphasised the continued need for international assistance given the ravages of war, US embargo, and more recently Hurricane Joan. Despite the hostility recorded towards the Stirling link in a Scottish Conservative Party publication, it should be noted that both links were established without opposition from the Conservative groups on both Councils⁽¹⁸⁾.

The driving force behind these other forms of local authority action is less an alternative foreign policy, and rather a new internationalism which sees a role for local communities in foreign aid and development co-operation. Where challenges come to this approach, they are less likely to be in denial of the political right to take action. Instead they tend to come under the general heading: does the Council know what it is doing? Specifically, doubts are raised about the interpretation of legislation covering local government, which may be used to justify international activities. (This more often comes from officials than from elected members.) Secondly there is frustration over the translation of avowed commitment (often given as a result of a high profile overseas disaster) into practical and sustainable action. And finally there is concern that when practical action is undertaken by local authorities, it is based upon an insufficient understanding of the complexities and sensitivities of aid provision.

On the legality of Council initiatives in this sphere there is much hesitancy and misapprehension. There is little explicit provision in local government legislation for linking, technical assistance, positive trading, or the host of other activities which Councils might contemplate. Equally, however, there is no explicit provision for the well-accepted practice of UK towns twinning with Marseilles, Bruges, Baden-Baden or wherever. It is a matter then as to how the legislation is interpreted. An attempt has been made to provide guidelines for local authorities in Scotland, who might wish to pursue international development initiatives⁽¹⁹⁾. This highlights the paramount nature of the discretionary powers of Section 83 (1-3) of the 1973 Local Government (Scotland) Act, governed by the clause that expenditure under this provision by a local authority must be that 'which in their opinion is in the interests of their area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants'. Section 83 is to be used only for activities that are not explicitly referred to in other legislation or prohibited by any other law. The exercise of this section is commonplace for many Councils, and is used regularly to provide grants, host events, provide Council premises and so on, for organisations which are active in the locality, bearing in mind now of course the provisions of S17 of the Local Government Act 1988 which inhibits local authority support and publicity for certain types of campaigns. From time to time, of course, these decisions are challenged, or Council legal services advise against the decision.

Every Council then faces the decision either to accept the advice or to note it and go ahead. It would be irresponsible to do the latter if other legal opinion was sought and was equally decisive. (This is particularly the case given the provisions of Section 5.2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 which charges the monitoring officer to intervene if he or she feels that a **prospective** decision is likely to contravene the law.) For instance at the height of the Ethiopian famine, many Councils wished to provide direct financial assistance. Some were advised that to do so was clearly ultra vires and the proposal lapsed. Others however were informed that whilst to send a donation overseas was not possible, it was perfectly legal for Councils to give financial support to international development agencies in the UK⁽²⁰⁾. Some Councils then provided substantial grants with a proviso that the recipient charity release a similar amount from its domestic budget for use overseas. There is considerable scope for imaginative, and relatively uncontentious (legally if not politically) use of local authority powers. Eric Milligan, the Vice-President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, endorsing a review of local authority powers for international activity, has said: "It is clear that the existing powers available to Councils enable a great deal to be done. COSLA's advice to our constituent members would be that we should not allow the fear of legal challenge, or fear of the auditor prompted by the kind of ratepayer whose sole purpose is never to pay any, to frighten us into inactivity"⁽²¹⁾.

Leaving aside the difficult area of providing direct financial, material or staff assistance to countries overseas, it is clear that Councils, Regional and District, have considerable scope for improving public understanding of international issues. A sample of the powers available may include: organising seminars and conferences (Section 90 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973); helping with the expenses of receiving distinguished visitors or local government representatives (Section 83 of the 1973 Act); using local economic development powers to support the location or expansion of local businesses or co-ops involved in trade with developing countries (Section 83 or the 1973 Act as amended by Section 50 of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982); providing exhibition space in libraries, museums, etc (Sections 15 and 16 of the 1973 Act). Indeed over the years it has more often been the case that initiatives in Scotland have foundered for reasons other than legal impediment. There may be an unwillingness or declared inability to provide funds; a failure to monitor bureaucratic inertia whereby a decision from a Council committee is passed to a relevant (or indeed irrelevant) official and no action occurs; a failure to prioritise an issue for action, whereby the Council shows interest by attending Conferences or issuing supportive statements but comes forward with no concrete proposals; or simply a lack of imagination.

Scotland seems particularly prone to not getting off the starting blocks. It is difficult to be authoritative in comparisons between English and Scottish local authorities on this issue given the lack of a detailed study into all aspects of activity, far less of initiatives which have failed to come to fruition. But

whereas 32 English local authorities are officially twinned with Third World communities, excluding Nicaragua, the equivalent figure for Scotland is 1 – Aberdeen being twinned with Bulawayo, Zimbabwe⁽²²⁾. And of the 23 local authorities seeking to promote technical co-operation, again only 1 – Shetlands Islands Council – comes from Scotland⁽²³⁾.

These figures do not properly represent of course either the expressed interest or indeed current undertakings by Scottish Councils with respect to international co-operation. For instance, 4 Regional and 14 District Councils were represented at the 1988 Scottish Conference on Local Authority Action for Third World Development. And some, especially Strathclyde, have a history of responding imaginatively to specific proposals for quite significant undertakings.

However there does not exist in Scotland a local authority with the clearly identified commitment, funding allocation and inclusive strategy which has been called for, and is in evidence in for example Holland and Germany. Two initiatives which subsequently petered out come to mind. Firstly Fife Regional Council: in October 1984 the Council approved a motion providing assistance to, and co-operation with, the Third World, and earmarked £20,000 for direct relief via Save The Children Fund. Little seems to have happened however by June 1985 when the Chief Executive was asked to report on the action taken to implement the Council's decision; and asked to review the possible alternative uses for the sum of £20,000⁽²⁴⁾. The Council was still anxious to make a direct contribution and instructed the Chairman of the Basic Services Committee along with the Director of Engineering "to consider the possible training of engineering staff who would be willing to participate in Third World projects". Additionally the Director of Supplies was asked to investigate the possibility of goods presently used by the Regional Council being obtained in suitable circumstances from Third World countries. By the time the matter was fully reviewed again in 1988, the matter of £20,000 had been dropped, and no mention was made of the training of engineers. The report did note however that Nicaraguan coffee was used in a number of residential homes, and in the Councillors' lounge "for an experimental period"⁽²⁵⁾.

None of what Fife proposed was impossible, although changes in legislation like S17 of the Local Government Act 1988 have tightened the rules with respect to non-commercial considerations being employed in accepting or refusing tenders for public supply contracts. The donation to SCF may have been possible on the basis discussed previously. If not, alternative ideas had been discussed with the then leader of the Council, including specifically to establish a Development Education Centre in Fife. (Fife has, deservedly, a reputation as one of the best Education Authorities in Scotland.) The secondment of staff is relatively commonplace, if funding from an outside body can be found. (The local authority role is to provide guaranteed employment, preserved pension rights, and temporary cover if necessary.) The Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief had by 1985 already supplied

engineers to work in Sudan, amongst them employees of local authorities like North Humberside Council⁽²⁶⁾. By 1988 REDR had supplied 100 engineers for relief work in Malaysia, Uganda, Somalia, Kampuchea (now Cambodia), and Swaziland out of its membership list of 624. The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Overseas Development Panel, also promotes overseas secondments on a longer term. Interestingly, a previous head of the Panel, himself a Chief Executive, has complained that "although we circulate overseas vacancies to local authority chief executives, I am not convinced that vacancy information always gets off the chief executive's desk."⁽²⁷⁾

It may seem unfair to Fife (particularly given the mention in the opening section of the chapter) to single it out for criticism. That is not meant to be the case. But Fife does exhibit a common failing which is that the members and officials seem unaware of initiatives elsewhere, and in Fife's particular case this is exacerbated by a reluctance to attend seminars and conferences where the necessary information can be gathered. (Fife appears not to have been represented at the various conferences on this issue organised in Scotland or England in recent years.)

Yet even where local authorities appear well-informed the outcome cannot always be assured. Lothian Regional Council in 1985 approved a motion calling for action with respect to the Ethiopian famine⁽²⁸⁾. Specifically, it called for the establishment of twinning links with a "famine-affected local government region of Ethiopia to explore ways in which social, cultural and recreational ties.....can be developed." A meeting was also called for with aid organisations "to explore the possibility of utilisation of relevant officials' skills by UK based development agencies" and such organisations were to be asked for materials on Third World poverty to be distributed to Lothian schools. The meeting was less than an unalloyed success. The Regional Solicitor had reported that it was extremely doubtful whether Council officers could be sent abroad to assist. The representative from the Department of Highways asked if the aid agencies would then meet the costs of such secondments. The non-governmental organisations (ngos) replied that they saw this as having to be borne by the Council. In turn the agencies asked if the Council were prepared to pay for the cost of the materials which it wished to distribute to schools, which did not receive an affirmative reply. Other proposals made by the Council – to provide training places in its various departments for personnel from overseas, and to make available 50 surplus buses met with an unenthusiastic response from the agencies.

It was not till April 1987 that the requested report on twinning links was provided by the Director of Education. This was not quite the feasibility study expected as it pointed out the problems of linking with war-torn Ethiopia. (Interestingly he felt the same conditions applied to Nicaragua. Although this view had not been solicited, by the time the report was compiled, discussion of links between Edinburgh and Nicaragua were underway). The Director reminded the Council that support was also being given to existing links

between Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and communities overseas (albeit these are mainly in Europe as the report concedes).

The Council was then asked to note the good educational work already being done, and was invited to "consider whether there are any other approaches which the Council may wish to adopt." Perhaps not surprisingly the prospect of concerted action waned, although the Council has responded sympathetically to subsequent requests for support from local aid organisations and continues to be represented at relevant national gatherings.

The lukewarm response of the aid agencies demonstrated at the Lothian meeting is revealing. There is no doubt that even amongst those most concerned to promote actions in support of the Third World, there is a lack of agreement as to the value of focussing on local authorities. Development agencies fear that very often local authorities are prompted to action by an outdated, and indeed misguided view of the process of under-development and poverty. This may be particularly marked if, as was the case of Fife and Lothian, the impetus was provided by a famine. Whilst the desire to do something is laudable, the concern is that the efforts of the aid agencies in the '70s and '80s to highlight not only the political processes which cause poverty – debt, oppression, unfair terms of trade – but to show also the positive attempts by the poor to overcome these difficulties will be undermined. Instead they see a return to the concentration on direct material and technical provision, and a focus on the apolitical aspects of poverty – climate, water, shelter. This fear is exacerbated by the attempts made by some twin towns to provide material assistance directly, which has led to what has been called the 'global jumble sale' approach where surplus equipment is shipped overseas to needy communities⁽²⁹⁾. Apocryphal stories abound of surplus library books being sent to communities who not only cannot read English, but the majority cannot read at all. Even where the material may be useful linking authorities can be dogged by inexperience which may be frustrating and expensive. The Aberdeen-Bulawayo link for instance has from the outset concentrated on material aid provision collecting items from carpentry tools and sutures to ambulances and wheelchairs⁽³⁰⁾. However this is not supported by having a strong counterpart organisation in Zimbabwe or an adequate knowledge of the complexities of importing foreign goods into the country. Thus punitive import duties have delayed the deployment of equipment, and raised the prospect of the recipient or Aberdeen having to pay unexpected cash levies. In addition overdependence on a single council officer in Bulawayo has led to a lack of information and doubts as to the safe arrival of earlier shipments. What is not in question is the commitment of the Aberdeen-Bulawayo Trust to the project. The problem is that of an insufficient awareness of the development process and realities of Zimbabwe and an expectation that others will share the concern to act on a charitable basis – be it the waiving of import dues or the hope that the RAF would fly out the equipment⁽³¹⁾.

The final concern of the aid agencies is that local authority twins, founded

without a proper appreciation of poverty and its gradations in the Third World, may fail to assist those most in need, in favour of those who are instead most accessible. Even more, local authority twins, by bolstering the positions of the local elites, and those in authority, may actually enhance the position of those groups in Third World communities who contribute to the poverty of the groups with which experienced development agencies work. A particularly graphic, but surely atypical, example of this was provided by a senior official of an English local authority, for whom anonymity will provide a blessed cloak. He had been seconded to an African town under a technical twinning arrangement. In conversation with me he provided an insight which is so disturbing that I wrote it down immediately. The Chief Executive in Africa was unelected, being appointed by the Head of State. A Council did exist but 30 of its 33 members were suspended. Following a visit to the English twin in which he was impressed by the tender system employed by the Council (even prior to privatisation), the Chief Executive invited tenders for a new market in his own town. These were opened publicly, the cheapest chosen, and the contractors then told to build it even more cheaply. According to the English official, the existing market was then cleared at gunpoint of its Muslim traders (exacerbating existing religious tension in the town), and the contractors told to finish on time or they would not be paid. As a result work continued 16 hours per day. On completion the market was restocked by demanding articles from suppliers, again at gunpoint. As the official concluded: "It works perfectly. It's clean and honestly run. If the system of construction works for his country I'm not going to question it."⁽³²⁾

Whilst this may be an extreme position, there is no doubt that some local authority officials see their assistance as being purely technical and therefore they need not be concerned about the local politics of the recipient community – a view not shared by most experienced ngos. But I believe it would be wrong to caricature local authority action on this basis. Anecdotal examples of muddle and bad practice (and what aid agency has not experienced this?) can be met with illustrations of successful achievement and sensitive approaches. The key question remains, should local authorities be engaged in this field of activity, and if so, what useful role can they play?

Unlike the polarised views which the alternative foreign policy strategy prompts, there appears to be a widespread consensus that development co-operation is a fit area for local authority involvement. Chris Patten, at that time Minister of Overseas Development Administration, has said: "Well established links exist between the ODA and individual local authorities which enable us to draw upon their skills and experience to assist developing countries."⁽³³⁾ Here he clearly had in mind the technical secondments and in-house training provision, which the ODA and the British Council have supported. A wider perspective has been taken by Moni Malhoutra, Assistant General Secretary of the Commonwealth, who argued that local authorities should focus on one or two objectives, pre-eminent amongst which "must be to raise the level of popular awareness and popular commitment within the

industrialised countries of the north to the cause of international development".⁽³⁴⁾ Both of these views are encompassed in a document drawn up at the First European Conference on Towns and Development held in Cologne, September 1985. Entitled *From Charity to Justice* but more commonly known as the *Cologne Appeal* it envisages joint action between local authorities in the areas of information, education, community linking, campaigning and overseas project funding.

The *Cologne Appeal* has been endorsed by COSLA⁽³⁵⁾ and by various Scottish Councils including Edinburgh, Stirling, and Dumbarton. However, as we have seen, the problem of implementation remains. This is not resolved by simply cataloguing the good examples which abound, though it is good to be reassured that some aspects of the Appeal are being successfully implemented. Cumbria County Council for instance has produced a full colour wallchart emphasising the interdependence of its communities with those overseas; Nottinghamshire County Council organised a series of lectures, exhibitions and cultural events on the theme of "North-South: One World"; whilst its libraries service produced a North-South interdependence booklist with over 90 titles. There are also any number of broadbased action plans e.g. Germany's Mainz Declaration⁽³⁶⁾, which calls for budget provisions for North-South related information and education work, and the establishment of local documentation centres and co-ordination offices; in the UK the Agenda for Action in Education produced by the Society of Education Officers and Local Government International Bureau⁽³⁷⁾ which includes for instance a call to "explore the scope for using or developing cross-cultural and international links and exchanges, in-service study groups and visits, contact with overseas visitors living in local communities and contact with other ethnic and cultural communities" as part of a review of arrangements for the development of international perspectives across the curriculum.

Instead it is the basis of, and structure for, any proposed scheme which deserves better attention. As we have seen, initiatives which are prompted by a need for a rapid response to an international issue be it the forced removal of a South African Township or a sub-Saharan famine, rarely have a satisfactory outcome. In the short term, the local authority can do little, and in the long term the issue disappears from public and Council consciousness. Secondly, such crisis responses can stimulate misguided attitudes to the Third World and prompt inappropriate action. By contrast the *Cologne Appeal* stresses a more reflective consideration of an interdependent world and the role of the local community in it.

Next, any initiative should be rooted in the community and not just in the Council. This can be done by establishing a development forum which draws upon existing activity in internationalist groups, but also by establishing what are the current and past links with the Third World. For example, Stirling District Council is undertaking a survey to find out what direct experience people in the area have of Third World countries through having lived there,

travelled on business or tourism, or indeed emigrated from there to Stirling.

Beyond the personal experiences will be structural links in trade, commerce, and education, both current and past. Far better than stating that the world is interdependent would be to illustrate its local manifestations. Once this review is undertaken, it should be clear that it is complex issues which are being dealt with. People in Scotland may give generously to charity but often they don't like the idea of the Third World developing so that for example India produces jute more cheaply than Dundee; and Zimbabwean cigarettes are much cheaper than Glasgow's (the loss of 200 years of tobacco processing with the imminent closure of Wills is confirmation of the impact of world competition). The Border textile industry supported by COSLA wants continued protection against cheap Third World imports.

If the local authority is to be involved in an action strategy then it is essential that support structures are established in the Council. As we have seen a lone interested Councillor is insufficient. Either he or she is marginalised (I once heard of a particularly enthusiastic proponent of anti-apartheid issues dismissed as "the member for Soweto"), or council officials are less than prompt in response to Council's declaration of intent. Ideally Councils should appoint an officer to deal with the issue. In Holland for example, of the 26 cities active on the three issues of development co-operation, anti-apartheid and peace, 21 have at least one full-time officer assigned as a co-ordinator, and they spend nearly \$1m on these issues⁽³⁸⁾. In the UK, by contrast, at a time of budget cuts, it has meant that Council decisions to employ staff in Stirling and Cumbria have been difficult to put into effect.

However, funding might be more justified if an integrated strategy was adopted. Bremen in West Germany provides a particularly good example with a comprehensive programme which has involved: revamping the Bremen Overseas Museum (previously the Colonial Museum) to take account of the problems caused by colonisation; twinning with Corinto, Nicaragua and Puna, India; funding overseas projects through established ngos; establishing a public information centre; and promoting research in its academic institutions (leading to, for example, a textbook produced in conjunction with SWAPO for Namibian refugee children).

If Councils want to get into the tricky area of technical twinning and project funding then they should use the expertise available. There is no need to encourage the view that local authority action means an alternative aid policy. On funding many Councils now promote public collections, facilitated by Council publicity, administration and premises with the revenue raised being earmarked for a specific project through an international ngo. In Dunfermline District Council substantial sums were raised for the Sheshamane Water Project run by OXFAM, whilst Kirkcaldy District Council supports an Action Aid funded project in the Gambia. Many other Councils participated in Council Aid, run by the ill-starred War on Want.

On training, the British Council and the Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham, are constantly in the market for placements. For example, from 1979-89, English and Welsh local authorities provided 247 training attachments to the Development Administration Group (DAG) at the University of Birmingham; but only 11 attachments were provided by Scottish local authorities. Yet the DAG has experienced difficulty in securing enough offers to meet its needs and anticipated an increased need of such short term training places in the future⁽³⁹⁾.

The British Council has placed students in Strathclyde Region, but has made requests to other regions in the past without offers being forthcoming⁽⁴⁰⁾. In this instance, a fee may be charged by the local authority so no cost is involved. The Industrial Training Placement Unit of the British Council seeks places in, for example, environmental health, computer programming, planning; which are all available in local authorities.

The legitimacy of local authorities engaging in a decentralised development co-operation strategy is no longer in question. The Overseas Development Administration has recently provided a grant of £150,000 to the Local Government International Bureau to promote North-South links "to facilitate direct involvement of local authorities and local people in development initiatives focussed at a local level"⁽⁴¹⁾. However, Council initiatives must proceed from an analysis which recognises the benefit to their own community of increased inter-national understanding and exchange, and thus develop a strategy for action, integrated with their existing function, allied to adequate resourcing. If they act in the belief, however, that they are doing the Third World a favour, and development co-operation activities are supplementary to their function then not only is the analysis flawed, but the desired outcomes are likely to be frustrated.

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